

Neighborhood Grapevine

**City of Milwaukee's
Department of Neighborhood Services
Tom Barrett-Mayor Art Dalhberg-Commissioner**



Mayor Barrett highlighting ways the City can help people prevent foreclosure and the loss of housing. Go to www.milwaukeehousinghelp.org for information.

TWO NEW INSPECTION PROGRAMS TO IMPROVE HOUSING STOCK

As the number of foreclosures continue to flood the real estate market DNS is continuing Mayor Tom Barrett's directive to protect the City's housing stock and deal with the growing numbers of vacant properties. Last summer the Mayor announced several program initiatives to help those facing the prospect of losing their homes. Starting in January of 2010 two additional new programs came on-line to help prevent more damage to the City's housing stock.

The **Vacant Building Registration (VBR)** program hopes to limit the time vacant property stands idle and unused. It will identify empty property and move it on to a path of utility, rehabilitation or sale. Vacant buildings attract crime, are often targets for arson and a source of blight when surrounding efforts are trying to

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Winners of the Anti-Graffiti PSA contest pose with City Officials. (L-R) Capt. Gregory Habeck, Ald. Terry Witkowski, DNS Anti-Graffiti Coordinator Sharon Blando, and the student winners; Terrill Glover, Tyler Skibinski and Hope Merens.

DNS takes the anti-graffiti fight to the air!

If you listen to the radio on 103 KISS FM you might have heard a new Public Service Announcement (PSA) asking kids to stop tagging. What you heard were the winners of a new contest to create radio PSA's targeting kids using youth as the messengers.

In a first of its kind contest in the nation, Keep America Beautiful issued grants under its "Stop Graffiti Now" program. Milwaukee was one of only four cities winning a grant. The proposal was to create a youth oriented program to educate kids about the problem of graffiti and to find positive ways to focus youth's activities.

103 KISS FM was selected to work with DNS Anti-graffiti staff to develop the contest and the PSA's. The kick-off event was hosted at the Milwaukee School of Languages. The theme for the program was "Graffiti in Any Language is Wrong!" The students at the school prepared for the kick-off event by creating posters and artwork

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Winners of the Anti-graffiti radio PSA contest got a tour of the KISS FM radio station just before they started their recording session.

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reflecting their various cultures and languages. Hmong, French, German and Spanish are a few of the languages that the anti-graffiti message was crafted in. Over the winter months the contestants worked on their scripts and submitted their messages.

Three winners were selected from the many entries. The winners were eligible to visit the KISS FM 103 studios and have their PSA recorded and professionally produced at the station. The kids also got the opportunity to tour the station and get a behind the scenes access to the many facets of the radio station complex.

The winners are: Terrill Glover from Westside Academy II, Tyler Skibinski from Greenfield High School, and Hope Merens with her classmates from Mapledale School, Helen Pfaff, Samantha Allie and Adine Barrientos. During the contest and the radio production, video for a "Making of the PSA" was shot and is currently being edited. Ultimately the video will be played on the City's government cable Channel 25.

The PSA's were played at various time slots on KISS FM. It is hoped the kids listening will take the message from their peers and help stop the graffiti in the City. 🍷



Terrill Glover from Westside Academy II steps up to the microphone to record his anti-graffiti radio PSA produced at KISS FM studios.



(L to R) Chase P. Sperry and Hunter O. Doyle , both 22-years old and from Chicago, Illinois were arrested in downtown Milwaukee.

Out of State "Artists" Caught in Milwaukee's Downtown

Thanks to the watchful eyes of some downtown Milwaukeean, a pair of Illinois taggers got to try on some new jewelry compliments of the Milwaukee Police department. Perhaps they thought spring break meant it was time to go on vacation and break the law.

The real ironic twist to the story is had these adults been caught in their home state, they would be looking at 8 felony charges instead of a reduced charge of a misdemeanor here in Wisconsin. It is a growing problem noted by DNS Anti-graffiti inspector Sharon Blando.

All of the States that surround Wisconsin charge a vandal with a felony once the damage hits \$300. In Wisconsin, you would need to do over 8 times as much damage or \$2500 before you would get tagged with a felony. Efforts to bring "Prosecution Parity" have failed in the state legislature despite past resolutions introduced to change the law.

Irate citizens continue to vent their wrath at the faceless graffiti tags that repeatedly deface their garages, homes and businesses. Frustrated citizens and DNS inspectors firmly believe taggers are coming to Milwaukee, perfecting their techniques, even willing to be caught to increase their "street creed" amongst their criminal peers, just so they can return home and do their tag in record time without being caught.

According to the criminal complaint, Chase P. Sperry and Hunter O. Doyle came up to Milwaukee armed with 66+ cans of spray paint plus markers for a weekend of tagging while staying at a Milwaukee hotel. Their tags were "neph, nspry, brain and eh". Following a complaint about a suspicious person to MPD, the pair were caught, but not before doing an estimated \$6,850 worth of damage to public and private property according to the complaint.

The District Attorney is expected to charge the two Chicago Art Institute students with 8 separate counts of graffiti. Judge Triggiano is holding a hearing on the matter on June 23rd. We'll keep you posted. 🍷

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improve the neighborhood.

Properties that are exempt include those in pre-foreclosure, bankruptcy action, actively being rehabed, condos and rentals where the vacancy rate does not exceed 95%. Other rules may apply.

One of the biggest complaints to DNS is the lack of maintenance done on vacant property. The stereotypical image of a home with broken windows and tall grass is a fair indicator of an owner's ability to manage their property. The new code addresses that issue and empowers the City to write orders and if needed, secure the building and handle the yard maintenance, passing the cost of such City action on to the owner. Bringing maintenance standards to all buildings, regardless of their current state of occupancy, adds value to the neighborhood.

The VBR ordinance also helps to ensure the safety of fire and rescue personnel who may be called to the property in case of an emergency. Keeping the interior functional with code compliant stairs and floors will help protect those who enter these buildings.

Keeping the building insured and secured will discourage criminal activity from entering the building. The insurance will protect the neighbors who could be harmed by unsafe conditions next door. Year round maintenance is required, such as lawn cutting in summer and snow shoveling in winter.

The cost of this program is \$250 every six months. The first six months are free.

The closer a building is in terms of being code compliant, the safer it is and the easier it is to sell. The VBR program hopes to have a complete inventory of the City's vacant property by the end of 2010.

A second new program called the **Residential Rental Inspection** (RRI) program went into effect January 1, 2010. The two areas where this pilot program is being introduced contain a portion of the City that has a higher than average rate of building code complaints. These areas also have a higher level of rental units than owner-occupied and thus these neighborhoods are more at risk from the problems related to absentee landlords. The target areas also have an above average history of illegal units. The higher rental rates encourage the practice of over renting property at the expense of occupant safety. Over renting a property also has negative impacts on a neighborhood. Finally, the city's dependence on a "complaints only" system has been less effective since some tenants may be conspiring with the landlord to exceed the building capacity to lower their rent. This program levels the playing field for all property owners and tenants in the area of the program.

The RRI program applies to two small target areas, one on the city's east side and one in the Lindsey Heights area. The eastside area is bounded by Edgewood Ave. to Newberry Blvd. and Cambridge Ave. to Hackett Ave. The Lindsey Heights area is roughly bounded by Wright to Galena Streets and 29th to I-43.

DNS sent notifications in January 2010 to rental property owners advising them of the ordinance requirements and providing the property owner with a pre-selected RRI inspection date and time. The notification included an application form and other information about the program. If you own rental property in one of the two target areas and don't receive a notification, you should contact DNS at 286-8824 to request an application for the Residential Rental Inspection Program. Owner occupied two-family residential properties are exempt from the RRI requirements.

The base fee for the Residential Rental Inspection is \$85 per unit. The cost for the program for properties found to be safe, sanitary and code compliant and receiving a 4 year certificate will amount to just under 6 cents per unit per day. Units found with a life/safety or disqualifying violations will only be granted a one-year certificate after corrections are made. That cost amounts to 23 cents per unit per day.

If the building has 9 or fewer residential rental units, DNS will be inspecting all of the units. If the building has 10 or more units, DNS will inspect a sampling of the total units. The \$85 per unit inspection fee will only be charged for the actual number of units inspected by DNS.

The Residential Rental Inspection certificate is typically good for 4 years, but that will depend on the condition of the building and the building's rental units at the time of inspection.

Well maintained buildings without any units having disqualifying violations will receive a 4-year RRI certificate. If any units within the building are found to have disqualifying violations, the building cannot receive a 4-year certificate. Instead a one year RRI certificate will be issued after the violations have been corrected.

Disqualifying violations are conditions which affect the safe, decent and sanitary living conditions of persons occupying a residential unit, or other conditions that violate the provisions of the building code, building maintenance code or zoning code that indicate in their totality that the rental unit is not being properly maintained.

If the owner fails to provide access to all units within the building on the agreed upon time, DNS may charge a \$50 per unit fee. A new inspection date shall be scheduled.

For more details about the RRI program, go to:

<http://www.milwaukee.gov/DNS/RRI>

Another new program that started in April of 2009 is the **Abandoned Property in Foreclosure** (APIF) program. Across the country many cities are struggling with an unprecedented number of foreclosures. Typically foreclosed homes turned over quickly and new owners would quickly take the responsibility for the repairs. Now with the business model of some banks, that plan is not working. Hundreds of loans and homes are tied up in a lengthy process that results in the

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DNS Photos from the field...



O.K. You make the call. How many violation(s) do you see here? Look close as something should be obvious!

All right—let's start with the obvious stuff. The RED flag in the middle should have helped you. That Bobcat is considered a heavy commercial vehicle. That's a no no in any residential neighborhood. It's hard to say, but the vehicle closest to the garage looks like a dump truck. If true, then that vehicle is OK. The zoning code says one commercial vehicle per premise so long as it is 10 ft or less in height, 22 ft. or less in length and has 6 wheels or less. No tow trucks are allowed. If it's a trailer and a truck with the name of the business on each, it's a no no. That's considered two commercial vehicles even if one is a trailer. No markings on the vehicle or trailer? Then OK.

How about the sidewalk? See some warning signs? Trace the downspout. It discharges a little short, resulting in soil eroding onto the sidewalk. Perhaps worthy of a warning if soil continues down to the sewer. By the way, a soil erosion citation is the highest priced violation on the books. Over \$900 for a Commercial Property per day if caught! Less for Residential violations. Check out the discharge point of the downspout. Hope the postman has some ice skates. In winter, this setup would result in an icing condition across the sidewalk, another no no. Discharge pipes must be 5 ft. away from and run parallel to the property line.

All right, I know you want to disqualify the missile launcher-bazooka looking tube-vent stack. Guess what? It may be legal. Ugly...but legal. If it was installed per the manufacturer's recommendations and is UL approved, it could be legal. If not, the inspector could require the owner to submit structural calculations showing proper support and wind bracing.

Presuming there is a woodburning furnace in the basement, that would need a permit to be installed. How did you do? **To report code violations call 414-286-2268 or go to www.city.milwaukee.gov and click on E-Notify.** 🐾



(L-R) are Lakisha Bridges, Danae Lindsey, Shondra Duncan, Lori Gallup, Luke Gorsline, Jason Rusnak, Mike Stahler, Gregg Vosswinkel

Meet the New DNS Staff

by Todd Weiler and staff contributions

Lakisha Bridges came to DNS from the Treasurer's office after being there for 8 months. She says if you want to be her friend, call her Kisha. Kisha may have been questioning her decision to move as she is now the voice you will hear with questions about DNS's newest programs, the Vacant Building Registration (VBR) and the Residential Rental Inspection Program. It's quite a challenge to take the reins of two new programs and be expected to know all the answers to give to the public. Perhaps she gets that energy from her collection of Tinker Bell memorabilia. Kisha is a graduate of Milwaukee's Hamilton High School. In her spare time she enjoys spending time with her 8 and 15-year old daughters.

Danae Lindsey is a new Nuisance Control Officer. Danae is a lifelong resident of the Milwaukee area. She has a bachelors degree in Biology from the University of Arkansas-Pine Bluff. She really enjoys working for DNS as it enables her to do positive things in the community. Danae enjoys reading, traveling and roller-skating.

Shondra Duncan is also a new Nuisance Control Officer. She says she enjoys her new opportunity to work for the City. Shondra is a lifelong resident of Wisconsin. Her favorite pet is her dog Lady. In her spare time she likes attending sporting events and traveling.

I typically tease new employees to write their bio for this column by saying, "leave out your prison record, even if it is more interesting." Well, those words finally caught up with me when I asked **Lori Gallup** to write her bio for the Grapevine. Turns out she has a prison record...as a Corrections Officer. She said she needed a break from being in the Jail! I guess she'll be good at spotting a "bad apple" when it comes by. Lori also worked in the home improvement and construction trades for a number of years.

After spending five years as a plumber, **Luke Gorsline** decided to finish his degree in Conservation and Environmental Science, which he did at UW-Milwaukee. Shortly after graduation he landed a temp position with the City of Milwaukee DNS as a Nuisance Control Officer. After a short bout of unemployment he was able to

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make it back into DNS as an Environmental Hygienist. Luke enjoys camping, hiking and Brazilian jiu-jitsu. He's hoping to branch out into other aspects of combat sports in the future. I think I want Luke as my backup.

Jason Rusnak was hired as a Code Enforcement inspector. After spending 11 years in the commercial construction industry he completed various projects in Wisconsin, Illinois, Nebraska, and Tennessee. Jason says he involuntarily changed career paths and discovered the wonderful world of DNS. Jason is a LEED Accredited Professional with the United States Green Building Council. That is something we'll be hearing a lot of in the future. Jason has had previous training as a first responder, EMT-A, and safety professional. Currently he is a commander of the honor guard for the Knights of Columbus.

Mike Stahler comes to DNS from MPS. Mike is a new Code Enforcement inspector. Mike worked at MPS for 1 1/2 years as a School Engineer. Prior to that Mike had similar jobs at Whitnall Schools and St. Veronica/St. Thomas Aquinas Academy. Before that he spent 17 years in the textile industry. Mike's father worked for the City as a water engineer for almost 40 years so now he can carry on the proud tradition of civil service.

Gregg Vosswinkel is a new Code Enforcement inspector. Gregg is a lifelong resident of the Milwaukee metro area. He spent his childhood in Brown Deer when it was still pretty rural. Upon graduating from U.W. Whitewater in 1980 with a B.B.A. in Finance, Gregg chose to make his home in Milwaukee. He worked in the banking and trust field for 14 years and then the building products industry. As an avid "do it yourself" person his work often entailed familiarity with various sections of the building code. Gregg is working on his Commercial Building Code Certification. He's proud to call Milwaukee home and to help to keep Milwaukee one of the great cities in America.

Franzina Thomas has joined DNS as a clerical staff in the Electrical Section. Franzina is an Illinois native and a U.S. Army veteran. She was trained as a LPN at San Antonio's Brook Medical Center. She is a graduate of Cardinal Stritch University majoring in business management. She has been a dedicated staff member and volunteer counselor at women's shelters and drug and alcohol treatment facilities. In her free time, she enjoys writing, skating, Latin dancing, baseball, bowling and pool leagues.

Brian Kerlin is a new Sprinkler Inspector at DNS. Brian was raised in Greenfield and attended Greenfield High. Brian has been in the Fire Sprinkler Industry since he was 17 yrs old. Formerly he was a Local 183 Sprinkler Fitter. Brian has 2 boys that help keep him young. He enjoys hunting, fishing, woodworking, welding, riding motorcycle, boating, and mentoring his children. His personal quote: "If you don't have time to do it right the first time, when are you going to have time to do it over"



Brian Kerlin is in the Sprinkler Section.

Michael Mazmanian is one of the newest Code Enforcement inspectors. Mike's a graduate of Case High School in Racine with attendance at Oklahoma State University. Michael has 8 years of experience working in the architecture and construction fields. He says he enjoys anything outside and his favorite pet is his cat Peeve.

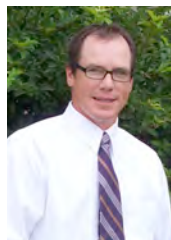


DNS new hires (L to R) Peter Schwartz, Yolanda Thomas, Michael Mazmanian, Marty Kleiber

Yolanda Thomas is a Code Enforcement Inspector. She has been a city employee since 1993 as a lead monitor, construction inspector trainee, code enforcement intern, code enforcement inspector (residential and commercial), sanitation inspector, lead risk assessor and now returning for a second bout of DNS. Yolanda has two beautiful grandchildren that make it all worthwhile. She is a U.S. Army veteran. Every Sunday you can find her in church and during the week she likes going to the gym and reading. This fall she plans on attending MATC to obtain her Commercial Building Code Certification.

Peter Schwartz is a new Code Enforcement inspector. Peter has a Degree in Architectural Technology from MATC and has a Commercial Building Code inspector credential from the State. He's worked as a Commercial Production manager, a business development assistant, Code Specialist and a CAD designer. In his free time he has volunteered for Habitat for Humanity projects.

Martin ("Marty") Kleiber is a native of Milwaukee who also has lived in several other parts of the country, including New England, Texas, and Chicago, before returning here some twenty-one years ago to raise a family. Marty and his wife Patty now both travel the streets of the city - Marty as Residential Code Enforcement Inspector in the central city, Patty as Pre-Natal Care Coordinator for Moms-to-Be all over the city and in Kenosha as well. Marty has a son and daughter in college. Marty has practiced as a licensed architect for nearly thirty years, including more than sixteen years with Kahler Slater here in Milwaukee. As a Liturgical Design Consultant with KSA, Marty had the opportunity to serve churches throughout Wisconsin, finally having a chance to explore such north woods destinations as Woodruff/Minocqua and Phillips. He even made several trips to Alaska to help congregations build and furnish their new churches in Anchorage and Eagle River. Marty finds the work in DNS to be interesting and worthwhile, especially on those occasions when a house or apartment gets an "extreme home makeover" as the result of a push from their "friendly neighborhood building inspector!" Marty is a Code Enforcement inspector.



Mike Olen is a new Code Enforcement Inspector.

Michael Olen is a new Code Enforcement Inspector. Mike is a Chicago native having attended Maine West High School and then moving to Milwaukee. Mike is a graduate of Cardinal Stritch University with a degree in Business in 2008. Mike has a pair of young boys 2 and 3-years old to keep him occupied. When he gets any free time he prefers to spend it on the links. ♡

What's the Value of one inspection?

A popular theme recently is calling for less regulation. As world events have proven in dramatic fashion, one area where government regulation made a difference is to compare the results between the Haitian and Chilean earthquakes. One system had no regulation with disastrous results. The other had a code and inspection program in place that saved hundreds of lives. Clearly there is a role for government in building safety. Here's a local example where one initial inspection would have save the owner a major headache.

Perhaps an owner's worst nightmare is when an inspector arrives and says the work is done wrong. Worse yet is having to "redo" the work. One such Milwaukee home owner faced that challenge. A City licensed contractor built an addition to a home, about which DNS Construction inspector Dave Leonard said, "Not one single aspect of the construction was code compliant." The contractor took out a permit, but never once called for any of the required inspections before proceeding with the work. The following pictures show the result.

Among the items at fault – a foundation out of square, not poured to proper depth (4 ft.) and uninsulated; using chip-board for forms and leaving them in place; improper framing; over spanned joists; improper wall framing; improper roof framing; having framing exposed to bare ground; soil in the crawl space; no venting; improper ducting of heat to room; no cold air return; no insulation in the floor; eaves of different sizes, and poor quality of work. The original contractor began the demolition which required the project to start over from scratch. Eventually that contractor walked away from the job. DNS worked with the owner and the new contractor, Fabio Aliva Construction, to help finish the job. The new contractor took over and, working with DNS, finished the job in a code compliant manner. The owner is still looking for the first contractor.

New regulations went into effect this spring that required new certification testing and licensing of building contractors in Wisconsin. Hopefully the implementation of those new rules will protect the consumer and make our buildings worthy of world class standards. 🍷



When a building's foundation is exposed and the open cores are visible one knows more trouble is underneath. Foam is not an approved mortar.

AED = Saving a life

by Michael Marass, Plumbing Section

Imagine your child, or your wife laying on the floor with no pulse and not breathing. Would you know what to do to help preserve that life until help arrived? In the Municipal building we have an Automated External Defibrillator [AED], on every floor, do you know where it is and would you be able to use it? DNS employees are encouraged to learn how to use it via one of the FREE training sessions with which Tuition Benefit can be used.

It was early September, the second day of school, I was in my Principal's office when I collapsed and fell to the floor. The quick action of Miss Eastern the Principal, and the rescue squad brought me back to life. I was on the floor for six minutes with no heart beat and not breathing. In most cases the least a patient like this would experience would be significant brain damage, in most cases certain death. Miss Eastern called for the fire department, then called back to say "he is on the floor with no pulse and he is not breathing". For those that know me I am slim, I do not smoke and I appear to be a fit active person, but in fact I had undiagnosed heart disease. 🍷



Like the floating mountains of Pandora in "Avatar" this crooked footing is floating in air once excavated for inspection. Details, details! One needs to know how to connect things so they can come together. That didn't happen here.



No effort was made to structurally tie-in the first addition to the home as evident by the siding still in place. The final DNS approved addition.

Three More Tales from the Back Deck



Last September in Milwaukee this deck collapsed. As the photo indicates the nails pulled out and a piece of fascia board is still attached. Porches need to be secured to the framing of the house.



Clear example from the Simpson catalog about why the proper attachment is needed and what happens when the load path is not continuous.



Why continuous load path in the code works. Some day you may need the extra support. It's a plane porch that's still standing! Thanks to the carpenter and the code it didn't collapse causing further injury or damage.

Last edition we showed you a porch under reconstruction where the floor trusses were anchored via hangers into the face boards, which contained unstable wood. Well...we told you so. The first photo shows a porch that collapsed under just such a scenario. Notice the nails sticking out. Without removing the face boards so the header board could bear on a sistered joist anchored to the house, it had transferred the load to the nails. Per the Wisconsin Uniform Dwelling Code: *Comm 21.02 The construction of buildings and structures shall result in a system that provides a complete load path capable of transferring all loads from point of origin through the load-resisting elements to the foundation. Here is what failure and success look like.*

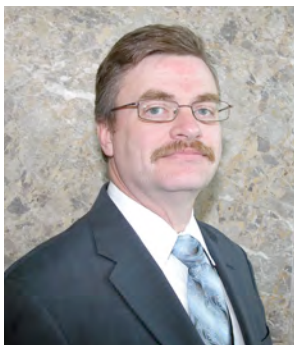
Fair warning for all of the “do-it-yourselfers” that are thinking about designing porch decks and balconies. 🐞

Flying Crabs Invade Milwaukee this Spring



Some days people are just plain crabby. The amusing thing about working at DNS is the many ways people try to out do each other for attention. Some got pinched this spring when it caught the attention of DNS via a few panicked complainants who called and said, “There is a flying crab on the expressway.” The weather on February 2nd was a bit gusty and indeed “big red” appeared to be making a break from the boiling pot atop the Milwaukee Market. That same morning a food service delivery truck got stuck under the I-94 north bound bridge near Mitchell St. shutting down the highway for a few hours. All we needed next was a dairy truck loaded with butter to tip over and catch fire to have one wreck of a meal.

A few months later more crabs crept up on top of a building bringing out the zoning inspector. A fair warning to all of those inspired by these antics. ANY and ALL inflatable rooftop balloons, tents, fabrications or advertising items are illegal in Milwaukee. The inflatables can break loose, catch wires, block vents, catch fire or tear loose roofing supports. Read the code before you read the inflation instructions of your balloon. The plan examiners at the Permit Center can help you with “what if” questions so you can keep your proverbial lobster out of hot water! 🐞



COMMISSIONER'S CORNER

by Commissioner Art Dahlberg

This edition of the Grapevine contains highlights of several new programs operated by DNS. The challenges facing Milwaukee's building stock are numerous and the resources to fix them are scarce. Many times organizations are tested at their darkest hour and emerge

with a unified voice and purpose during their endeavor.

The new Abandoned Property In Foreclosure Program, APIF), Vacant Building Registration Program (VBR) and Residential Rental Inspection (RRI) program are pro-active steps aimed at getting ahead of a problem before it becomes unmanageable. Some will say it is more government bureaucracy, others will welcome it as they have to live next to the problem that has lingered on their block. The consensus is something needs to be done. The Common Council and Mayor have listened and acted.

The one thing history has shown us is that it repeats itself. The deaths of thousands over the years have paved the way to prevention as we've adopted codes and standards for protecting us from each other. We've learned from tragedy and mistakes how to do things better and the net result is a more affordable, prosperous and longer life. Many less developed areas of the world are struggling to reach the standards we now take for granted. We expect safe and healthy buildings. Failure to heed the warnings from our past failures such as deadly school and hotel fires will lead to cutting corners and hurting those that least have the power to change the circumstances of their living.

The early signs of distress to Milwaukee's housing rose like a tsunami wave when foreclosures swamped the courts. The vacant homes in the neighborhoods stood empty for years instead of months. The APIF, VBR and RRI are intensely thought out programs. They are created to improve the condition of the City. They are funded to be revenue neutral and bring the cost of the service to those involved in the process, not something more for the average taxpayer to pay. The programs have sunset clauses and will be examined for their effectiveness at their conclusion.

This is a challenging time of year for DNS. The new VBR program, for example, cuts across all DNS sections from residential complaints to new construction. It is an issue that everyone has a stake in. The new programs, atop a heavy and growing list of complaints from the public about various building and property issues, is one we take as our commitment to help protect the public. I'd like to thank the many staff that are involved in this process. I know the extra burden it creates. I'd ask for the public to help us by alerting us to problems in their neighborhoods so we can stop the "bleeding" and start the "healing". Don't assume someone else will call in the problem. Together we can succeed and hopefully historians will keep Milwaukee on the world map as a safe and successful place to live.

Art Dahlberg

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property going vacant and destabilizing once healthy neighborhoods.

Fortunately Milwaukee got ahead of this problem and adopted the **Abandoned Property in Foreclosure (APIF)** program starting in January. APIF is different in that it identifies the parties involved early on so that when a problem pops up at a parcel, DNS knows who to call. It also requires the lender to make monthly inspections and do the required maintenance for the property.

The way the program works is once a lis pendens (Notice of Foreclosure suit) is filed at the courthouse, DNS sends a letter to the mortgager filing the lis pendens. The letter spells out the responsibilities of the mortgager taking the property back during the upcoming court process. Once a property is abandoned, the party having a financial interest in the building must register with DNS. There is a \$35 filing fee and during the vacancy the lien holder must address the maintenance and security issues of the building.

There is a dedicated web page detailing all of the necessary steps a realtor and/or a bank should be aware of when dealing with foreclosed property. The page also aids in the process of checking compliance issues with other City required compliance programs as well as exiting from the APIF program.

<http://www.milwaukee.gov/DNS/APIF/BankersChecklist.htm>

Citizens should know they are a critical link in licking the foreclosure problem in Milwaukee. Because people move out overnight without warning, DNS needs to know when a property goes vacant. Early warning signs are the lack of lawn maintenance or snow shoveling, the buildup of mail or door flyers, the lack of window treatments or shades, etc. If you see windows knocked out, doors kicked in, or other signs of forcible entry, call DNS at 414-286-2268 with the address. Your call can prevent further deterioration to the neighborhood and help protect your property value.

All of the new programs have sunset clauses in them and may be tweaked for efficiencies. At the end, they will be evaluated for their effectiveness and may or may not be renewed depending on Common Council action. 🍷

DNS How to reach us



Department of Neighborhood Services
286-2268 841 N. Broadway RM 105

Have a contribution for the next edition of the
DNS GRAPEVINE? Deadline September 15, 2010
Email it to Todd Weiler, Editor: tweile@milwaukee.gov